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A Little Friendly Cloak and Dagger

The newspapers are jammed with stories concerning spies and rumors of spies. The world of cloak and dagger not only concerns itself with our declared enemies, but also involves our allies spying on us.

It is this gray area of espionage that causes so much pain to everyone.

The head of the CIA department involved with ferreting out spies who work for friendly powers is Frank Ferret.

Frank said, "Spying on friends is like cheating on your wife."

"What do you mean by that?" I asked him.

"Beats me, but it always gets everybody's attention. I think what I'm trying to say is that there is nothing wrong with having a secret liaison until it becomes public knowledge. Once it's blabbed all over town then everyone demands punishment, because the cuckolded country can no longer claim it didn't know what was going on."

"I never thought of the espionage business as a form of adultery."

"Only with your friends," Frank cautioned me. "What you have to understand is, the western powers have a mutual understanding that we can

microfilm each other's defense capabilities, providing we don't get caught. If the word gets out that we're being spied on by a friendly country, then we have to show public outrage."

"Name a friend who has done that."

"All the good guys have spies."

"What happens when you catch one of the good guys photographing the Stealth bomber?"

"Our style is to arrest him quietly and boot him discreetly out of the United States. Then his country will quietly boot one of our spies out, and we'll pretend it didn't happen. But if someone leaks the story, then we have a serious problem."

"Why is that?"

"Arresting a spy from a friendly power raises a lot more questions than it answers. Instead of praising us for catching the spy, the press wants to know how many more just like him are out there. There is a hue and cry in America, and every intelligence agency hates a hue and cry. That's why we'd rather not have agents of allies arrested. But the worst thing about nabbing spies is having to hold a public trial. If they plead not guilty, their defense lawyers will try to embarrass us by

asking for every secret the U.S. government has. They know we'll make any plea bargain to avoid producing evidence in court."

"What kind of plea bargain do you offer them?"

"If the rat pleads guilty, we'll give him 20 years in the slammer and promise he'll be exchanged as soon as possible for one of our guys doing 20 years in his country."

"Are there many spies from friendly countries working here?"

"I should hope so. The reason for that isn't because we have the most secrets, but rather because the United States is a fun country to spy on. No spies want to go to the Soviet Union any more because they can't drink the milk."

"Does the U.S. maintain CIA agents in our friends' countries as well?"

"Of course we do—but we don't call them spies, we call them 'Freedom Agents.'"

"Do our friends know that our 'Freedom Agents' are spying on them?"

"Yes, but they don't care because with tourism way down in their countries, the CIA covert funds are the only hard dollars they are going to see this year."

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